United Nations S/PV.7693

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7693rd meeting
Monday, 16 May 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Aboulatta	(Egypt)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Barro
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2016/407)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-13791 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2016/407)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/407, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: Let me first congratulate Egypt on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month.

The Secretary-General's report before the Council (S/2016/407) details essential events in Kosovo and the region, and the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) from mid-January to mid-April. However, some developments since the Secretary-General's previous report (S/2016/99) are of more importance than the routine activities. Accordingly, today I wish to highlight those and some broader considerations. I have spent a good part of my professional life on members' side of this table, and I am therefore aware that routine reporting is not always the best use of time devoted to matters on which the Council remains actively seized.

First of all, Kosovo has been and continues to be at the centre of issues that are vital to overall security in Europe and to relations in a wider context. As I emphasized in my previous statement to the Council in February (see S/PV.7637), internal political dynamics in Pristina preoccupied our Mission — as well as the European Union (EU) missions and many other actors — for almost one year, culminating this April in the inauguration of a new President of Kosovo. Also during April, Serbian general elections were successfully held, with a new Parliament and Cabinet there currently in the process of formation.

The election of a new President of Kosovo, albeit under a divisive atmosphere, and the newly mandated Government of the Republic of Serbia provide together, I believe, an excellent opportunity to draw a line under a period that has often been marked by political infighting and other distractions. I have noted with appreciation the conciliatory messages and vision presented both by Prime Minister Vučić and by President Thaçi following their respective electoral successes. I join other engaged actors in the hope that these peaceful transitions of power will help the political scene to settle and offer more room for energy to be spent on other, more fundamental challenges facing the region.

Less than two weeks ago, the population of Kosovo received important and undoubtedly welcome news. The European Commission formally proposed to the EU Council and EU Parliament to transfer Kosovo to the visa-free short-stay list for travel in the Schengen area. The authorities of Kosovo deserve credit for the efforts made towards fulfilling the conditions of the visa liberalization road map. At the same time, they have acknowledged that a great deal of work remains to be done in order to translate this important step into the concrete economic and social progress expected by Kosovo's people.

I note that one month earlier, the EU Stabilization and Association Agreement for Kosovo was also announced. The Republic of Serbia's Stabilization and Association Agreement entered into force in September 2013. Again, placed side by side, these crucial achievements demonstrate the progress that the region is making towards the goal of greater integration, with all the benefits such integration brings. The links are not always clearly spelled out between the ongoing

peace process, which is at the core of our UNMIK mandate, and these EU processes. In fact, the links are fundamental, stressed not simply in resolution 1244 (1999) , but also in the far-sighted European Council Summit held in Thessaloniki, Greece, in 2003 and ever since. The standards and conditions set forth in EU stabilization and association agreements are not ends in themselves, but more importantly the means for generating peace, prosperity and well-being for people.

For Pristina and Belgrade, integration is closely interlinked with the EU-facilitated high-level dialogue process. The capacity to meet the standards of integration directly reinforces the capacity for productive political dialogue and other important channels of mutual cooperation. Kosovo's recent advancement in its European perspective should reinforce and enhance the dialogue process between Belgrade and Pristina, which is fundamental to Kosovo's future security and to peace in the region.

A salient feature of the consensus on which the EU-facilitated dialogue rests is the requirement for flexibility and innovation. All possibilities should be on the table and should be debated openly if this framework of discussion is to make swifter and meaningful progress. This moment, with electoral processes nearly concluded on both sides, appears to be a propitious time to re-energize the talks and build new momentum. I believe that this must remain a central objective on both the EU and United Nations agendas during the coming months.

The establishment of the Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo, ever since it was first agreed in April 2013, has been subject to much misunderstanding and controversy in public discourse among both communities. To borrow words spoken by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini 10 days ago in Pristina, the Community/Association represents "a step towards a stronger Kosovo, not a weaker one, and in a more stable region". It was agreed by both sides at the highest level in order to allow for the livable integration of the Serb community and other communities into public life in Kosovo. During his inaugural address, President Thaçi stressed themes of reconciliation and spoke of the difficulty but also the necessity of leaving the past behind. The dialogue and agreements between Pristina and Belgrade are essential to this process and are real steps on the path to lasting peace.

Kosovo still faces the hard-nosed realities caused by unemployment, inequality, the challenges of developing a productive economy to meet sustainable development goals and overcome legacies of impunity, and weaknesses in its rule of law institutions. All these factors are serious challenges to the mandate of promoting peace and stability. International involvement should be a central component of support that can help Kosovo's institutions, and indeed the wider region, to meet such difficult challenges. Resources that are applied through international channels, including through our Mission, should be mutually reinforcing and directed efficiently towards meeting these common goals.

I have spoken to leaders representing all parties, political stripes and communities during the past weeks and months. I will do much more of this in the coming days. The main concerns I hear are those that are familiar everywhere in post-conflict settings: the need for economic opportunity, positive future prospects for communities and families, better health care and a clean environment. While visiting municipalities in the north and other parts of Kosovo, I saw just how essential it is that the engagement of the international community — including the United Nations, the EU and Member States — be focused on the real living conditions of the people. Real Kosovo politics are local. What matters is how leaders, like those to whom I have spoken in various municipalities, address the everyday needs of the people in their communities; how they understand their grievances; how they find solutions. If identity politics primarily drove the wars during the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, what we are witnessing now is the unity or polarization of people around issues that are foremost social, economic, and environmental.

While visiting different parts of Kosovo, I observed how much of what we sometimes call the "old world" is dispensable. Militant nationalism has lost the mandate of the heavens. What is sorely awaited is a new alternative. When I speak with Kosovo's young people about their concerns, "jobs" and "justice" are the two words I hear the most often.

Within Kosovo's political sphere, continuing differences and intense debate remain essential. I hope those debates will move into acceptable channels where they belong and where leaders can best work towards meeting the real interests of people. That includes, obviously, a strong democratic opposition. The political profile of the Kosovo opposition has for the past year

been involved in a tense effort to change the horizon of power in the Assembly by any means necessary, including violence. I believe that its reconsideration of that path, though wrongly portrayed by some as a descent into dissent, is rather an opportunity to revitalize the atmosphere, which still suffers from deep mistrust, and to return to healthy democratic norms without sacrificing the substance of political dissent and debate. Whatever political reconfiguration may or may not be in the cards, what is more important is that Kosovo's political actors behave responsibly by taking on the issues that matter most for the future.

Our Mission remains unique, not only for what it is, but also for what it is not. UNMIK no longer administers Kosovo. It is not a parallel structure. It is not an obstacle to any objective, any institution or any individual. UNMIK remains important for the support and legitimacy it can provide; for the focus it can help to encourage; for the experience and know-how it freely shares; and for its role as a bridge between the Council and the people and communities of Kosovo and the region. We have been assessing and recalibrating our own use of resources to assist areas where they most directly promote the fulfilment of our mandate, on human rights issues for example. Indeed, as the leading United Nations body on the ground we are working closely with Kosovo institutions as well as with international partners to promote the realization of high human rights standards. We are part of the broadest and most inclusive efforts to help discourage corruption and support the rule of law area, realize better opportunities for families and for the younger generation, and strengthen the protection of non-majority and vulnerable communities. We are also drawing on expertise and resources from across the United Nations system in areas where they may be of assistance, for example the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and many bodies that are specialized in pressing issues, including the just handling of migrant and refugee flows and discouraging young people from the paths that lead to violent extremism and terrorism.

To work at its best and in order to work together with the leadership in both Pristina and Belgrade — as well as with EU institutions — and to remain flexible and adapt our Mission, we depend upon the informed support of the Council. With the Council's support, that is where we intend to take the Mission in the days ahead.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): I thank you, Sir, for the attention you have accorded to the question of Kosovo and Metohija through the regular exchange of views in Security Council meetings convened to discuss this topic pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999).

The status-neutral role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is paramount to the process of coordinating the international presence and the stabilization of the situation in the southern Serbian province. I would also like to point out that UNMIK's strengthened presence and role are of particular importance to the Republic of Serbia and, especially, to the Serbs and other non-Albanians living in Kosovo and Metohija, all the more so in view of their confidence and trust in the Mission. Serbia expects UNMIK to continue to fulfil its mandate under resolution 1244 (1999) in the coming period. In view of the overall political and security situation in Kosovo and Metohija and the continuation of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, we believe that UNMIK must continue to carry out its mandate in respect of all the issues relevant to the consistent implementation of the resolution.

Also of exceptional importance are the contributions made by other international organizations with mandates under resolution 1244 (1999), includubg the strengthening of security, the rule of law and respect for human rights in Kosovo and Metohija, especially those of the Serbs and other non-Albanians who, 17 years after the arrival of the international presence, continue to face numerous obstacles to the realization of their basic rights and fundamental freedoms.

The ongoing presence in Serbia of over 200,000 internally displaced persons forced to flee Kosovo and Metohija, along with many security and other challenges faced by its non-Albanian population, speak loudly and clearly. Only 1.9 per cent of those 200,000 internally displaced persons have been able to return in a sustainable manner. I therefore reiterate my call on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as I did in my last statement to the Council (see S/PV.7637), to explain why this information is not presented in his reports, whether that 1.9 per cent should be considered acceptable, and who stands ready to remedy it. The Special Representative would be well advised to present that information repeatedly in his

reports, as one of UNMIK's key goals and objectives under resolution 1244 (1999) is precisely to facilitate such returns.

Security incidents that negatively affect interethnic confidence and trust continue to present a serious challenge. Violence against non-Albanian communities — especially returnees — inevitably impacts their sense of security of and exacerbates anxieties among potential returnees. Sadly, those in charge of law and order have failed to act in almost all cases, while the number of the legally valid sentences passed against the perpetrators remains minimal. The Community Rights Assessment Report of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission in Kosovo of November 2015 reveals that intercommunity tensions surrounding the return of displaced persons remain a recurrent issue. It goes on to say that in most cases OSCE monitoring identifies only limited municipal efforts to address those tensions and build confidence and trust, and that during the reporting period the OSCE recorded a total of 479 incidents in Kosovo that had the potential to negatively affect the security perceptions of communities belonging to a numerical minority at the municipal level. More than half of these recorded incidents — 310 — affected the Kosovo Serb community, including returnees and the Serbian Orthodox church. They range from theft, verbal assault and severe damage to and illegal occupation of property, including cultural heritage sites and cemeteries, to incidents inciting hatred and aggressive nationalism and physical assaults or intimidation.

The assaults on the cultural and religious heritage of non-majority communities are particularly damaging for interethnic relations. The case in point is the break-in into the Orthodox church in the village of Pejcici, municipality of Prizren, and the demonstrators' desecration of the Church of Christ the Saviour in Pristina after the demonstrations of the opposition in downtown Pristina last January. This holy site, which was a frequent target of Albanians' attacks and which had served for years as a dump site, has been the subject of persistent attempts by the Pristina authorities to change the purpose of that location, even though it is registered in the cadastre as property of the Serbian Orthodox church.

The scribbling of graffiti on the walls of the Saint Nicholas Church in Pristina glorifying the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the terrorist organization around which the entire international community has united to fight against, is another case in point. The message of the desecrators of the religious site in the heart of Europe is "ISIL is coming". The assaults on the Serbian cultural and religious heritage and identity are painful evidence that the laws intended to protect and promote the community rights in Kosovo and Metohija are by and large dead letter. Only a serious effort on the part of all relevant actors to address all outstanding issues in a professional manner, in good faith and conscientiously, aimed at promoting normalization and creating conditions for genuine respect of human rights and freedoms for all may guarantee reconciliation, life together and respect for differences.

It is said in the current report (S/2016/407) that, compared to January and February 2015, the number of recorded incidents against minority communities was reduced in the same period this year. Nevertheless, the fact that inter-community incidents continue in Kosovo and Metohija on a daily basis sends a strong negative message to the members of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities. In view of the report's almost complete failure to mention ethnically-based incidents, let me point out just some of the incidents that did occur in the reporting period: assaults on returning Serbs and their property in the villages of Berkovo and Pasjane, the stoning of returnees' houses at Klina and Prizren, and the burning of, and the planting of explosive devices in, Serbian houses at Orahovac and Gnjilane.

Let me point out that measures to achieve durable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kosovo and Metohija, including the settlement and execution of their property and legal claims, need to continue to be taken. Let me also point out that, with regard to internally displaced persons, Serbia is strategically committed to fully supporting each and every person in his or her quest either for sustainable return or for local integration in the place of displacement as the case may be. Yet, my country's support to potential returnees will be insufficient short of proper engagement by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina and the acceptance or at least tolerance of the returnees by the receiving community and an active role of the international community. The drafters of all future reports should bear in mind that those goals have not been fulfilled yet.

I call again on the United Nations and other sectors of the international administration in Kosovo and Metohija to help overcome the problems that hinder the return of IDPs and jeopardize their position, including

continued personal threats and the usurpation of their property. We all, the international community included, run the risk of becoming gradually inured to the culture of impunity for the criminal offences committed against the Serbs and other non-Albanians. In the report by Freedom House, entitled *Freedom in the World 2015*, it is stated that ethnic Albanian officials rarely prosecute cases involving attacks on non-Albanians and that returning refugees face hostility and bleak economic prospects, and property reclamation by displaced persons remains problematic. Similarly, in the *Kosovo 2015 Human Rights Report* issued by the Department of State of the United States, it is outlined that the return process remained chronically plagued by security incidents and by the reluctance of the receiving communities to accept minority returnees.

The lack of security and marginalization of returnees often discourage returns. In its *Kosovo 2015 Report*, the European Commission says that authorities at local and central levels did not do enough to facilitate return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, while the OSCE Mission in Kosovo concludes in its report that full and effective institutional action on returns-related programmes at local and central levels continues to be hindered by a lack of strategic support from the range of Kosovo institutions involved and that relatively little has been done by municipal and central institutions to discourage such incidents, which inevitably have an impact on the sustainability of return and future interest in return.

The non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija face serious and manifold institutional, legal, administrative and political obstacles regarding the protection of their property rights. The obstacles run counter to the provisions and standards of relevant Universal and European conventions, while the property rights of the Serbs are violated all over Kosovo and Metohija even today, in particular by the sale of companies in Serbian communities. By and large, the economic situation of the Serbs and the members of other minority communities in the province is characterized by legal and physical insecurity and by numerous cases of usurped property that cannot be restored. A substantial part of the property of displaced Serbs has been sold in transactions in which forged sales agreements or false personal identification documents of alleged owners have been used. The Serbian community and the displaced Serbs, in particular, have therefore been much more vulnerable to economic vagaries and poverty.

Inevitably, an effective resolution of the cases of illegal occupation of property is essential for security and the rule of law in Kosovo and Metohija; the serious shortcomings in addressing these cases threaten the unimpeded enjoyment of property rights. I cannot but observe that, apart from the thematic report of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo on fraudulent property transactions in the Peć region, no other mission, including the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), charged with monitoring the rule of law, addressed this problem. It is precisely this problem, it is said in a report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, that the Kosovo authorities and the international community should seek to resolve without delay.

The results of the work of the Privatization Agency of Kosovo in Serbian communities are evidenced most patently in the municipality of Štrpce. Since the second half of 2014, the Agency usurped and liquidated the most important economic entities that accounted for most of the jobs and provided the livelihood to most of the people in the community. They include the Lola plant, Mladost department store, an agricultural combine, a veterinary clinic, Hotel Junior and the planning agency for a national park. These entities are now closed and their employees unemployed. The deterioration of the economic situation brought about by institutional violence may lead to the deterioration of the security situation and serious consequences for the local population wherefore greater attention and engagement by the international presence in the province, especially in northern Kosovo and Metohija, are called for.

Indeed, it is in the field of the rule of law that various international governmental and non-governmental organizations often report that the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law in Kosovo and Metohija continue to be the weakest links. According to the most recent Community Rights Assessment Report of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 67 per cent of non-Albanian respondents of a public survey stated that the lack of trust in Kosovo and Metohija judicial institutions was a serious obstacle in realizing their rights. As outlined in the World Report 2015 of Human Rights Watch, the justice system in Kosovo remains weak. This assessment is upheld also in USAID/Kosovo Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2014-2018. We are also concerned about media reports of the Pec Basic Court's indictment of 14 Kosovo and Metohija Serbs

from Klina municipality for war crimes allegedly committed during 1999. According to our information, the indictees are members of families that have submitted official applications to return.

I would like to take this opportunity to point out that the Republic of Serbia is committed to conducting constructive dialogue with Pristina at all levels and to implementing the agreements arrived at to date, which reflects its firm resolve to continue to actively contribute to promoting stability in the Western Balkans and seeking exclusively political and diplomatic solutions to all the remaining issues. Unfortunately, Pristina has not yet taken the necessary steps to fully implement the agreements reached in the Brussels talks. I would also recall that in the absence of proper mechanisms for ensuring the systematic, institutional and effective protection of the interests of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija, the signing of the Brussels agreement was motivated by the need to find ways to achieve that protection, which, according to the agreement, would be done by the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. Regrettably, owing to a lack of political will and the institutional crisis in Pristina, the key provisions of the Brussels agreement related to the establishment and functioning of the association/community have not yet been complied with.

Political radicalization and a deteriorating security situation resulting from political ferment and the rise of extremism are a threat to every resident of Kosovo and Metohija, and as a rule to the returnees to ethnically mixed communities most of all. The political crisis in Pristina carries the serious risk that the dissatisfaction of voters in majority communities will spill over and be aimed at minority communities, and the Serbian community in particular. It hardly seems likely that the incendiary nationalistic rhetoric of the politicians in Pristina will help to allay the tensions and bring reconciliation.

The fragile security situation in Kosovo and Metohija is also being exacerbated by rising extremism and radicalism. According to data for January, about 300 Kosovan Albanian men and 36 Albanian women joined the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria, a presence that, compared to the population of the territory of origin, represented the world's largest percentage of foreign terrorist fighters in ISIL. However, we have been informed more than once by the security services of some of our foreign partners that the unofficial number of the extremists from Kosovo and Metohija fighting on foreign battlefields differs wildly from the official data and that the actual number is close to 900.

The political, social and economic conditions of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija remain very complex. Serbia therefore hopes that the international community, and the United Nations in particular, will continue to provide assistance aimed at building the confidence and trust that we believe are essential to a firm foundation for a normal life for all in Kosovo and Metohija. In our view, a commitment to European integration is the driving force for normalizing relations between Belgrade and Pristina, and we hope that the European Union will continue to facilitate the dialogue. UNMIK's continued engagement is especially important, along with an undiminished international presence in Kosovo and Metohija as a whole, because, as the Secretary-General rightly concludes in his report, much work remains to be done in Kosovo and Metohija to promote greater tolerance and reconciliation among its communities, ensure the protection of minority communities, facilitate displaced people's return, uphold their property rights and safeguard religious traditions without impediment or stigma.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: I am very proud and honoured to address the Security Council today. I am honoured because this Chamber has been the scene of many important discussions leading to my country's freedom, and I am proud because the past few weeks have shown that Kosovo is on an irreversible path towards being embraced as an equal member of the world's great family of free nations.

I belong to a generation that has endured the worst. We have witnessed genocide, massacres, rape, exclusion and discrimination. We still have very fresh memories of a time when we were denied education and our schools were closed, when walls were built to separate the privileged minority from the majority and discriminate against them. We were denied access to public space; we were denied the right to play. The memory is still fresh of Serbian police beating and arresting our youngsters just because they were playing football.

But I am also fortunate enough to belong to a generation that has witnessed the birth of our State. We

are a generation that has defied all odds, and while we once struggled to exist, we have now seen what was once considered impossible become possible. Our resilience was tested, fought and defied, but we succeeded — not because we had the power, but because we were right and because we dared to dream and hope. We hoped to be equal, to be free and to play. I am pleased to be able to say that those are no longer just hopes. We are equal. We are free. And we will play.

Last week Kosovo was accepted to the Fédération Internationale de Football Associations (FIFA) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). That is a great victory for equality and for sport. It once again testifies to the fact that sport and talent have no boundaries. We are proud that our young talents will no longer feel isolated and excluded. We are proud that an overwhelming majority of FIFA and UEFA members supported our cause. It is nevertheless disturbing to see our northern neighbour Serbia outraged at that wonderful news. While it was the dream of Mr. Fadil Vokrri, President of our football federation, to bring people together through football, his counterpart from Serbia delivered a politically loaded statement saying that our belief that our fight was over and our UEFA membership definite was just a dream. Furthermore, the Serbian Prime Minister stated that Serbia would fight fiercely to reverse the UEFA decision.

Serbia still wants to deny our children the right to play and our young people the right to feel equal and to compete and excel. I have one message for them — live and let live. Kosovars deserve a chance. And when they are given that chance, they shine. They come home and make us all proud, just as Majlinda Kelmendi did last month when she regained the gold medal for judo in the European Championships. We are appalled by the statements made by Serbian officials last week. Instead of remorse and apologies for denying generations of Kosovars their right to play and compete, we hear rhetoric that belongs to the previous century. While young Serbian sportsmen and women are excelling in various sports, the Serbian Government wants to deny the same right and privilege to Kosovo's young people. Kosovo's acceptance into UEFA and FIFA takes nothing away from anyone. It simply makes it possible for Kosovo's citizens to display their amazing talents to the world on an equal footing with everyone else.

Another important achievement for Kosovars was the recommendation of the European Commission to grant us visa-free travel to the European Union (EU), allowing for the strengthening of business, social and cultural ties between the EU and Kosovo. Kosovo institutions had to work hard to reach this goal. We were given 101 criteria — twice as many as the rest of the Western Balkan countries — but hard work did pay off in the end, which is yet another reason for us to feel equal. We grew up in the former Yugoslavia as a generation treated like second-class citizens. We are now equal citizens of the European continent, sharing the same space and the same opportunities to travel. For us, this has added value, as one third of our population already lives in EU countries.

While we are aware that visa liberalization is not the solution to the many challenges we face in creating a better environment and better living conditions for our citizens, we are also absolutely sure that visa liberalization will help our people move and travel freely, experience their continent and feel equal. Kosovar institutions and all political parties in the Government and the opposition worked hard to achieve this objective. While there are obvious disagreements among members of our political class, there is no division on our fundamental strategic orientation and aspiration for Euro-Atlantic integration.

Our path towards European integration was sealed on 1 April when the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Kosovo and the EU entered into force. As High Representative Mogherini said,

> "this Agreement opens a new phase in the Kosovo-EU relationship and represents an important contribution to peace, stability and prosperity in Kosovo and the region at large".

While we celebrate these great achievements — and Kosovars have many reasons to feel proud — there are families in Kosovo who are still mourning and for whom the war never ended. These are the families of the missing. For example, Mrs. Cerkezi, 17 years after the war, continues to serve the table for herself and the members of her family who are still missing: her husband and her four sons. They were taken away by the Serbian military and paramilitary forces in the spring of 1999. She still waits for them and she needs them back. She, along with thousands of mothers from Kosovo, still wait for the whole truth or at least a proper burial for their loved ones. They want a place where they can mourn their lost family members. They demand answers. It is imperative that Serbia open its

files and archives to help close this painful chapter in our recent history.

The Serbian State, as has been documented, undertook unprecedented measures to hide the traces. They went as far as moving corpses from one mass grave to another and erected huge constructions on sites where the remains of human beings were buried. That is the case of Rudnice, in the region of Raška, where, despite the expectations raised by statements made by the Serbian authorities that 250 corpses — the remains of the victims — would be identified, only 54 Albanians have been found and reburied. They were innocent people executed in the massacres of Rezala and Cikatova.

We cannot build peace and reconciliation by burying the truth. The truth must be told. And the truth must be accepted, no matter how painful or shameful it is. Denial is not the answer. Kosovo wants good-neighbourly relations. Kosovo wants a new chapter in the region, but that requires the same level of commitment from all sides. The inter-State dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, facilitated by the European Union, is not an objective on its own; nor would it be a success, if it fails to normalize the relation between people.

On behalf of the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo, I would like to reiterate that in line with our Constitution we will implement every single agreement we have reached with Serbia in Brussels. But then, how can we say we are working towards normalizing relations, if the Serbian President compares Kosovo to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)? Just last month, the Serbian President made that claim in Indonesia, and it was not the first time such a comparison was made.

I would like to state loud and clear that Kosovo is a European country that aspires to become an EU member. We share the same values, and more importantly, we share the same aspirations as the rest of Europe. Trying to label us as something we are not, trying to portray us as a nation that has no European cultural identity, is not only inaccurate; it is also unworthy of a country that is an EU candidate.

In fact, the contrary is true. Kosovo is an active partner of the global coalition of nations set up to counter ISIL. Since the beginning, we have complied with the provisions of the Security Council resolutions urging countries to adopt legislation prohibiting the joining of armed conflicts by their citizens in countries outside their State territory. We have put in place the right mechanisms, legal acts and strategies to counter violent extremism. We have gone way beyond words. Dozens of non-governmental organizations that fed radicalization have been shut down. After a large number of arrests, including of imams, people are in trials for sowing intolerant attitudes and influencing vulnerable persons. And this year, no single Kosovar has joined ISIL.

Kosovo sees ISIL as a common regional threat — a threat to Kosovo, to Serbia and to the rest of the Balkans. But, unfortunately, terrorism is not the only threat we face; equally dangerous are the keeping alive of the Milošević dream and hate speech and rhetoric. Kosovo has never been and will never be a source of hatred towards others or a source of destabilization. We are Europeans, not only by the mere fact that we live on the European continent, but because we are Europeans in terms of ideals and aspirations. All levels of our institutions, parties and civil society are strongly committed to combating this global threat.

Members of the Security Council should visit Kosovo and witness first-hand how proud we are of our multicultural and multireligious society. We are a secular Republic that has become a champion in the region for interfaith dialogue. They will find in Kosovo many cities where mosques, Catholic and Orthodox churches share the same yard. But unlike our northern neighbour, we will never use or allow religion to divide and incite hatred.

One need only visit Pristina to see the biggest asset we have: our young people. They represent a generation that, unlike mine, which dreamed only of survival, feels free and equal. They want to excel, innovate, compete and contribute. One need only visit the Innovation Centre of Kosovo in Pristina to find young women and men who, through science and research, are developing start-ups and much more, aiming to solve global problems. This is the strong Kosovo innovation community, oriented towards the future and based on knowledge and new technology, that has started to be widely recognized by the international community and to be awarded for its excellence. One need only visit Kosovo to see hope, but a different and better kind from that of my generation. It is an enthusiastic generation of hope and desire to excel and contribute to the community and to the world.

Of course, we have problems, just like any newborn. We still need to work hard to strengthen the rule of law and to fight corruption and organized crime. Some very important steps were taken recently in terms of legislation with a law on electronic procurement and, concretely, with the arrest of more than 50 people, including high-level officials, involved in organized crime. We are fully aware of the challenges that lie ahead of us, and we are committed to addressing all of them. It is our duty as a generation to leave behind not only a free and independent Kosovo, as we are aware that independence and freedom are not self-sufficient, but are just the preconditions for the creation of other values. Our duty is to leave behind a Kosovo that is more prosperous, in peace with all its neighbours and an active member of the global family. That is a goal worth fighting for.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tanin, for his very comprehensive briefing on the situation, and assure him yet again of our full support in the exercise of his mandate. I also thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and the Ambassador of Kosovo for their statements.

France actively supports the pursuit of political dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo under European Union auspices. The recent convening of a meeting between the Serb and Kosovo Prime Ministers, with the participation of the High-Representative of the European Union, was a further demonstration of the commitment of Belgrade and Pristina to the process of bilateral rapprochement. Fresh headway has been seen this area in recent months, in particular the integration of former officials of the Serb Interior Ministry into Kosovar institutions, as well as the entry into force in March of the agreement on the mutual recognition of diplomas. We welcome those steps.

We are eager to see all commitments signed within the framework of the agreements concluded under the auspices of the European Union implemented as soon as possible, including the creation of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities, which is a cornerstone of the dialogue. The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina remains in general terms a sine qua non for their respective progress along the path of European integration. We therefore urge the Kosovo and Serb authorities to intensify their efforts to pursue dialogue in order to produce further concrete results in the coming months.

France remains concerned by the behaviour of a minority of the Kosovo opposition. Further disruptions of the work of the Assembly and violence and other acts of intimidation of elected officials are completely unacceptable. France calls on those responsible for such unacceptable actions to adhere to the standards of democracy and to express their concerns in the framework of existing institutions and with respect for the provisions of the Constitution. Violence and hate speech have no place in a society to which the overwhelming majority of Kosovo citizens aspire. Such actions imperil the progress patiently achieved by Kosovo for more than 10 years in the process of forging an independent, modern and democratic State. Despite these tensions, the Kosovo authorities must seek to keep the channels of dialogue open and continue to pay heed to the population. Domestic reforms are crucial to giving citizens new hope. The implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement must work to that end by fostering conditions conducive to the required change. The Kosovo authorities can count on our full support in that area.

Pursuing the efforts undertaken to entrench the rule of law in Kosovo must remain a greater priority than ever. That will entail first and foremost addressing impunity. The speedy ratification by the Kosovo President of the host agreement signed with the Government of the Netherlands as a precursor to the establishment of specialist chambers in The Hague is a decisive step forward, which we welcome. It is a clear demonstration of Kosovo's willingness to honour its commitments in the area of the rule of law. It is important going forward that all components of the specialist court take up their work according to the established timeline and that the Kosovo authorities cooperate fully to ensure that the prosecutions of those responsible for the crimes contained in the Marty report can commence.

The ongoing work on the issue of disappeared persons is also essential. In that regard, we welcome the recent appointment by Pristina of a Chair of delegation to the Joint Working Group on Missing Persons. We hope that it will provide an opportunity to give fresh impetus to the work of that body.

The consolidation of the rule of law will involve the fight against radicalization in all its forms. France welcomes the unconditional engagement of Kosovo in that area, both at the local level as well as through the membership of the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. I take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which works daily to uphold the rule of law and security in Kosovo.

France will continue to support the efforts of the Kosovo authorities to achieve international recognition for their State. We welcome the recent admission of Kosovo as the fifty-fifth member of the Union of European Football Associations, coming as its does just days before the kickoff of 2016 European Championships in France. We also actively support Kosovo's candidacy to INTERPOL and the Council of Europe, and the strengthening of Kosovo's status within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

I conclude by again recalling our hope for the continuation of the progressive transfer of the competencies of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo to the Kosovo authorities, and for a review of the reporting cycle in the Council of the situation in Kosovo, given the ongoing progress seen on the ground, particularly as concerns the consolidation of Kosovo institutions and the bilateral dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his informative briefing. I also thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku for their statements.

Resolution 1244 (1999) remains the internationally accepted legal basis for resolving the situation in Kosovo, including strict respect for the principle of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia. As Council members are aware, Uruguay has maintained its position of not recognizing Kosovo, underscoring the principle of the territorial integrity of States as a paramount standard of international law. That principle constitutes a central element for the peaceful coexistence and cooperation among the members of the international community.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/407) describes the political situation as being marked by tension and discord against the backdrop of the election by the Assembly of Kosovo of Mr. Hashim Thaçi as the new President of the province of Kosovo. Uruguay is concerned about the impact of political tensions on the security situation in Kosovo, as there have been a significant number of incidents, including violent protests, attacks and threats against civil servants and damage to State and private property, that are detailed in the report and that have spread throughout Kosovo. Uruguay regrets the occurrence of such incidents and encourages all efforts to find inclusive and peaceful forms of dialogue that will facilitate a solution to the problems facing Kosovo.

Uruguay also notes with concern outstanding issues in Kosovo in the area of the rule of law, such as accountability, impartiality, the effectiveness and independence of judges and prosecutors; the mistreatment of detainees, poor physical conditions, drug abuse, corruption and favouritism that prevail in prisons; prolonged pre-trial detention; and demands for compensation that are still pending. In that regard, Uruguay recognizes the important work of UNMIK in overcoming some challenges in the area of oversight and roll-out of certain rule of law functions, as well as its technical cooperation with the institutions of Belgrade and Pristina and its facilitation of requests for reciprocal legal assistance from States that do not recognize Kosovo.

Uruguay attaches great importance to combating sexual violence in conflict. In that regard, we welcome the regulation signed on 2 February by the Prime Minister of the province of Kosovo, establishing a Government commission and procedures for the verification and recognition of the status of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence as civilian victims. In particular, we welcome the fact that the reparations outlined in the law include access to pensions, free medical treatment, employment, income-generating activities and education.

Uruguay notes with satisfaction the promotion by UNMIK of activities with a youth and gender perspective, such as the organization of a round table on the role of young women in reconciliation. We also welcome the progress achieved by UNMIK on behalf of the International Human Rights Working Group with the Office of the Prime Minister in order to consider

its recommendations on the draft Kosovo human rights strategy (2016-2020).

In conclusion, I reiterate that Uruguay values the role played by UNMIK in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, and acknowledges the important role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the United Nations agencies present on the ground. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the important work of the women and men of UNMIK, whose efforts and dedication contribute to furthering the principles for which the Mission was created.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): We welcome and thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing on the report (S/2016/407) of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We welcome the participation of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia. We also welcome the participation of Ambassador Vlora Çitaku.

Based on our principled position that unilateral options are the wrong approach to resolving international controversies and until a settlement is reached by the contending parties, we reaffirm the validity of resolution 1244 (1999) as the applicable legal framework for reaching a comprehensive and peaceful solution of the Kosovo issue through dialogue and negotiations, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions. We therefore support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and understand the country's legitimate concerns on that issue.

We underline the fundamental role that the United Nations has been playing in Kosovo through UNMIK in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, its cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union (EU) Rule of Law Mission, and its continuous and constructive engagements with Pristina and Belgrade and all communities in Kosovo.

We continue to closely follow the situation in Kosovo. Taking note that the overall security situation remains stable.as outlined in the Secretary-General's report, we are particularly concerned with the tense and divisive political climate that has prevailed over the past six months. We consider absolutely unacceptable and condemnable the opposition party's continued disruptive and violent tactics against the Assembly of Kosovo, which are deliberately aimed at obstructing the normal performance of its duties.

The implementation of agreements between Belgrade and Pristina and the high-level European Union-facilitated dialogue has been facing consistent obstructions that have created a contentious political climate between the Government and the opposition and impeded meaningful progress in the implementation of major agreements, in particular regarding the establishment of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities.

We regret the prevailing climate of distrust and mutual accusations of delays in the implementation of agreements that have been reached, aggravated by tensions and fictions related to trade and development. That is even more regrettable considering that a positive note in the previous reporting period was struck by the initiatives of business leaders within the Chambers of Commerce in Belgrade and Pristina aimed at strengthening cooperation among the business communities. We expect that the political leaders of Belgrade and Pristina will be able to fulfil their commitments to implementing the concluded agreements, and that the high-level European Union-facilitated dialogue process will proceed in good faith and yield results.

On a positive note, we welcome the entry into force on 1 April of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo concluded in October 2015 and ratified by the European Parliament. Following the conclusion of an identical agreement with Serbia in 2013, we fully concur with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General that:

> "For Pristina and for Belgrade, integration is closely interlinked with the high-level Europe Union-facilitated dialogue process. The capacity to meet the standard of integration directly reinforces the capacity for productive political dialogue and for other important channels of mutual cooperation".

We greatly value the EU-facilitated dialogue regarding, concerning which, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General noted,

> "All possibilities should be on the table and should be debated openly if this framework of discussion

is to make swifter and meaningful progress. This moment, with electoral processes nearly concluded on both sides, appears to be a propitious time to re-energize the talks and build new momentum."

The rule of law still faces outstanding challenges. The Secretary-General's report identifies a number of prominent issues related to the judicial and law enforcement systems and the little progress made in the integration of judges and prosecutors from the Serbian judiciary into the Kosovo system, pursuant to the agreements reached through the European Union-facilitated dialogue.

Regarding cultural and religious heritage, despite the difficult relations between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Kosovo authorities, some concrete instances of dialogue have been reported, such as the conference organized by Kosovo authorities on interfaith dialogue and heritage protection, with the participation of the main religious creeds in Kosovo. It is our hope that such initiatives will take hold in Kosovo society, thereby contributing to fostering reconciliation and mutual understanding.

On human rights, it is key that the Kosovo human rights strategy be swiftly adopted and that the Joint Working Group on Missing Persons step up its efforts in resolving that painful issue for Kosovo society. Still, on human rights issues, young people are showing the way ahead. A good example was the signature on 14 February by 32 non-governmental youth organizations from the western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova of a "Balkan club" cooperation agreement establishing an information network to coordinate youth-related civil society engagement in the region.

The issues of youth radicalization, violent extremism and the presence of extremist organizations are ever-present challenges and matters of utmost concern. The adoption of a strategy by the Kosovo authorities on violent extremism and radicalization underpins the resolve of the authorities to pursue policies and implement energetic measures to counter such negative and dangerous trends.

We take note of the Secretary-General's observation that much work remains to be done to promote greater tolerance and reconciliation among the Kosovo communities and to ensure the protection of minority rights, facilitate the return of displaced persons, uphold their property rights and safeguard religious traditions without impediment or stigma. It is our hope that the wounds of the past will be overcome as soon as possible and that peace, tolerance and mutual understanding will prevail, permitting the building of a better future of economic and social progress for all of the people of the Balkans.

Finally, we commend UNMIK for its role in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and for its constructive engagement with Belgrade and Pristina, and the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in stabilizing and normalizing the situation in Kosovo.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin for his briefing. I also thank Foreign Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku for their statements.

Since 1999, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has made critical contributions to assisting the people of Kosovo in developing multiethnic democratic institutions to uphold the nation's rule of law, while respecting the rights of all of its citizens. We thank Special Representative Tanin and his long line of predecessors for their dedication and service to that effort. But as we hear today, and as we too often convene in this Chamber on this topic, we must acknowledge what we acknowledge every three months. UNMIK's mandate has largely been accomplished. The only reason we continue to meet with such regularity has nothing to do with the security situation in Kosovo. It has to do with politics.

Let us be clear. Now is the time to seriously reduce the footprint of the United Nations Mission. We have some very talented staff in UNMIK whose skills are desperately needed in other missions. There is no need for all of them to remain in Kosovo. In that regard, it is appropriate to reduce UNMIK's budget, and we welcome the reduction in UNMIK's budget request. The Council seems stuck in the past, needlessly convening here every three months, and we repeat our call to extend the Secretary-General's reporting period on UNMIK from every three months to every six months.

Pristina and Belgrade are rightly focused on the dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU). They now need to redouble their efforts to normalize relations through those discussions. European Union High Representative Mogherini's continued leadership is critical to advancing that important effort. Discussions without implementation, however, will lead nowhere.

For the sake of regional stability and Kosovo and Serbia's EU aspirations, we call upon Pristina and Belgrade to fully implement the commitments they have made throughout the dialogue talks, including those made in August 2015 regarding telecommunications, energy, freedom of movement and the establishment of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities without any more delay.

We were pleased to witness the peaceful democratic transition of power from former Kosovo President Jahjaga to President Thaçi, underscoring Kosovo's democratic maturation. We also applaud the well-managed collection of ballots in Kosovo for Serbian elections, supported by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. That is exactly the kind of cooperation needed between the two countries to improve the lives and protect the rights of their people.

Kosovo has made some strides. The signing between Kosovo and the European Union of the Stabilization and Association Agreement and the decision of the European Commission to support visa liberalization are enormous milestones signaling confidence in Kosovo's path towards European integration. Those are significant developments that have the potential to meaningfully impact the economy and the lives of the people of Kosovo.

We also witnessed an extraordinary moment in April. The participation of Kosovo athletes in the European Judo Championships, a competition hosted in Kazan, Russia, was appropriately a source of great pride, and all the more so when Kosovo judo competitor Majlinda Kelmendi took the gold medal home to Kosovo. It was a powerful and inspiring moment of victory for a country that deserves it. Her victory, as well as the decision of the Union of European Football Associations and, just last Friday, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association to accept Kosovo's participation will inspire Kosovo's young people and are wonderful examples of the change that has taken place. After years of isolation, Kosovo's athletes can indeed pursue their dreams and do so as proud representatives of their country.

On the economy, more must be done. While Kosovo's Government has adopted some pro-growth economic policies, there is still serious work to be done on the economic issues that continue to hold Kosovo back, including corruption and unemployment. Specifically, Kosovo should implement e-procurement; it should be more transparent about ongoing corruption cases in the civil service, and it should pass legislative amendments to ensure that political appointees who are convicted of corruption do not get to retain positions of power. Stronger policies and actions will result in less corruption, and less corruption in Kosovo, as in any country, will lead to more opportunities for all.

As we have discussed here in so many different contexts, law enforcement cooperation across borders is an essential component of any viable strategy to combat terrorism and counter organized crime. That is especially true in the Balkans. Kosovo's police continue to demonstrate their professionalism and capabilities, in cooperation with their neighbours and the international law enforcement community, but for too long, Kosovo's police have been excluded from the international community of police. It is critical that Kosovo fully integrate into that community, including the International Criminal Police Organization. Including Kosovo in our collective effort to counter common threats does more than benefit Kosovo. It serves the entire Balkans region and all of us worldwide.

Once again, the United States would like to thank Kosovo for its contributions to the global fight against terrorism and efforts to counter the scourge of foreign terrorist fighters. Kosovo's work through its national strategy to counter violent extremism and its law criminalizing foreign terrorist fighters are important contributions to that effort, rendering all the more offensive and counter-productive — I would say — the recent rhetoric of some officials in the region suggesting that recognizing Kosovo is akin to recognizing the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham.

In closing, let me direct some words to my colleagues, representatives of States Members of the United Nations. A minority of them have not yet recognized Kosovo. The United States urges them to consider taking steps to better integrate the citizens of that young country into the international community. It is the right thing to do, it is in line with Charter of the United Nations, and it will serve us all. Small steps, such as partnering with Kosovo through INTERPOL and other organizations, is in all of our interests and will serve well our collective efforts to advance peace and security.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Ambassador Tanin, for his

briefing, and welcome the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku back to the Council.

My delegation has taken careful note of the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/407) and in the Special Representative's briefing about developments in the political and security situation in the territory of Kosovo. We welcome the reported improvements — which, unlike the two previous reports, offer glimmers of hope —but we regret the continued acts of violence and obstruction of the smooth course of political life in Pristina. In that regard, Spain supports and endorses the Secretary-General's renewed call on all political leaders, including those in opposition, to act in a responsible manner and in line with the law, the good practices of democracy and the rule of law when voicing their political positions and opinions.

We also listened carefully to the analysis provided today by the Special Representative on the role played by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Spain strongly supports the important work carried out by the Mission and other international missions operating in Kosovo. We commend the particular attention accorded by the Special Representative, in the context of his mandate, to the promotion and protection of human rights, the rule of law and enhancing coexistence among the various communities of Kosovo. Spain believes that these three aspects are critical and indispensable if we are to make headway towards genuine reconciliation in accordance with democratic and European values. Against that backdrop, we call on all parties to maintain a constructive spirit and adequate cooperation with UNMIK and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General as they carry out their work.

It is also essential that progress be made in the high-level dialogue facilitated by the European Union. I reiterate Spain's support for the dialogue, which is consistent with the constructive spirit in which my country has consistently followed, without prejudice to our position of principle. We regret the lack of progress made in recent months at the political and technical levels. Trust must be fostered between the parties and constructive and committed dialogue on specific issues must resume. We cannot lose sight of the fact that this process was designed to find appropriate and effective responses that, independent of other considerations, would promote and fulfil the expectations, desires and needs of the entire population of Kosovo.

I therefore conclude by calling on the parties to resume without further delay — in their behaviour and practice and not just in words — their collaboration and cooperation with the Brussels process, to which there is no alternative. The first step to that end must be the implementation in its entirety and without prior conditions of the agreements concluded to date, with particular attention to the effective establishment of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): It is my pleasure to welcome Special the Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, back to the Council. I thank him for his briefing.

I also thank First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku for their important statements.

The Special Representative has provided us with the latest analysis of the current situation in Kosovo, which, in our opinion, still lacks improvement. Despite some positive developments, the region continues to face the same problems and challenges the Council discussed back in February. The internal political landscape in Kosovo is marred by violence. It is very disappointing that the work of the Kosovo Assembly is regularly disrupted, including by the release of tear gas canisters by some representatives. We are also worried about the street violence, with the Kosovo institutions' property being targeted by threats and vandalism. I underscore that acts of violence in any form remain an unacceptable means to express political views.

Ukraine is concerned that the political tensions may negatively impact the progress of the implementation of the major agreements between Belgrade and Pristina. Among the issues that demand urgent attention, we would underline the lack of needed actions on the part of the Kosovo institutions in establishing the association/community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo; problems incurred at the crossing points by cars registered by the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs; the implementation of the agreement on car insurance, and so on.

We urge Belgrade and Pristina to redouble their efforts to fulfil the provisions of the agreements of

19 April 2013 and 25 August 2015. We hope that, in the next reporting period, the Council will hear more positive news on their implementation, such as, for example, the progress recently made by Belgrade and Pristina in the area of the mutual recognition of diplomas.

Ukraine fully supports the high- and technical-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina facilitated by the European Union. In this regard, we hail the commitment of both sides expressed in January 2016 to continuing the normalization of their relations and to focus on the implementation of agreements reached. In our view, the Brussels dialogue should continue to play a central role. We also hope that the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo on 1 April will become another factor in the further stabilization of the situation and will promote a better atmosphere in the talks between Belgrade and Pristina.

Another important area in which success is much needed is the promotion of greater tolerance and reconciliation among communities in Kosovo, as well as the protection of minority rights and the facilitation of the return of displaced persons. Special attention should be paid to the continuous assaults on the cultural and religious heritage of non-majority communities, which could further poison interethnic relations. Ukraine is convinced that the solution of these problems will promote further political stability in Kosovo.

Finally, I would like to make some comments on the work of UNMIK. The Council's support for UNMIK, as well as the Kosovo Force, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union presences in Kosovo is particularly important at this stage. Their work and assistance to Kosovo institutions and communities continue to be essential to political stabilization and intercommunity reconciliation. The priorities of the Mission for the coming period should be focused on the promotion of peace, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo. Another task is monitoring the process of the implementation of the agreements between Belgrade and Pristina, especially in the context of creation of association/community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): I would like to begin by welcoming Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, to the Security Council and thanking him for his insightful briefing. I also welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku.

I warmly congratulate Mr. Hashim Thaçi on his election and inauguration as President of the Republic of Kosovo. The election was conducted in accordance with democratic procedures and was a significant step towards full-fledged democracy in Kosovo.

Seventeen years have passed since the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was established. I remember that in 1999 UNMIK was the only governing body in Kosovo, really an interim administration in the proper sense. Kosovo was just a devastated land and people with no governing structure. Now that Kosovo has its own Constitution, Government and Assembly, the responsibility of the Mission might have changed accordingly, and its role should be reconsidered. The work and setup of and resource allocation for UNMIK must accordingly be different. What then should be the Mission's current focus?

First, it should be to promote reconciliation among different ethnic groups in order to prevent unwanted instability in the Balkans region. In this regard, the Kosovar and Serbian authorities must continue to engage in dialogue and to normalize their relations, in a spirit of tolerance and common interest.

Secondly, there are other risks, including the infiltration of violent extremism and the continued flow of small arms. These elements galvanize or aggravate whatever antagonisms exist into violence, which could spill over into the region. So these are the problems that UNMIK must tackle as a matter of priority.

UNMIK has been playing an important role in addressing these priorities. But at the same time, if the international community coddles Kosovo too much, it might hinder Kosovo's ability to stand on its own feet. It is true that democracy has not yet fully taken root in Kosovo and that the Kosovar economy is still weak. However, in order to achieve sustainable stability and prosperity in Kosovo, Kosovo's ownership is of vital importance. Let us therefore trust in the Kosovar people, who are well qualified and well equipped to shape their own future.

In closing, I wish Ambassador Tanin every success in his important work and assure him of Japan's strong support for him and his Mission.

Mr. Barro (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Senegal wishes to congratulate Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for the high quality of the report that has just been presented to us (S/2016/407). We also welcome the presence among us of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and that of Ms. Vlora Çitaku of Kosovo.

My delegation welcomes the fact that the situation in Kosovo has remained stable overall despite the tense atmosphere, as described by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in his report, that surrounded the appointment of the new President, Mr. Hashim Thaçi. We would like to take this opportunity to wish Mr. Thaçi every success in his new office and to pay tribute to his predecessor, Ms. Atifete Jahjaga, for her leadership and her efforts to promote peace and development.

Senegal welcomes the ongoing dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, as demonstrated by the meeting that has just taken place in Brussels between the two countries. More specifically, my country would like to welcome the restated commitment of the new President and Prime Minister to the process of the normalization of the relationship between Belgrade and Pristina that has been undertaken under the auspices of the European Union, and to the comprehensive implementation of previously reached agreements, particularly concerning the creation of the Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo. In that respect, my delegation calls on both parties to pursue dialogue at the highest level under the auspices of the European Union and to encourage the relevant partners and countries and partners to continue to use their influence to support the negotiations.

We believe that now that the electoral process has come to a conclusion, the time is ripe to breathe new life into the discussions between Belgrade and Pristina in order to definitively turn a page in the history of both countries. That said, I am pleased to be able to welcome the two agreements signed by the Government of Kosovo in August 2015, one with Serbia, on the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo, and a second agreement, with Montenegro, on the demarcation of the border between the two countries.

The conclusion of a three-phase plan between the chambers of commerce of Belgrade and Pristina aimed at harmonizing veterinary certificates and resolving the technical issues hampering cross-border commerce also deserve our commendation, as does the signing by representatives of the Serbian armed forces and the Kosovo Force of an agreement on the complete lifting of the air security zone.

We strongly encourage both parties to continue along this path and to step up dialogue on the joint management of crossing points, and we urge stakeholders to make further advances towards peace and development, including by promoting the implementation of the agreements reached on 25 August 2015 in Northern Kosovo.

In terms of promoting the rule of law, my delegation welcomes the announcement of the imminent rollout of the work of the Specialist Chambers, a Kosovar institution that will be headquartered in the Netherlands and comprise international judges with the principal mandate of trying those responsible for serious crimes committed either during or immediately following the conflict in Kosovo.

By the same token, we deem vital that efforts continue in terms of cooperation and coordination between the parties in order to facilitate, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the return of displaced persons or, failing that, to work to find lasting solutions in that respect.

Senegal supports unreservedly the joint European Union-United Nations programme aimed at enhancing trust at the community level through the protection of cultural heritage, and we would recommend the ramping up of synergies, particularly in terms of cooperation in the field of information exchange so as to help resolve issues related to missing persons.

To conclude, my delegation would like once again to pay tribute to Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his wise leadership of UNMIK, and to welcome the achievements of the Kosovo Force, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and, of course, the European

Union, all of which are key stakeholders involved in the process of promoting peace and progress in Kosovo.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. China welcomes to today's meeting His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and thanks him for his statement. I have also listened attentively to the remarks of Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, and we understand Serbia's legitimate concerns with regard to the question of Kosovo. In our view, resolution 1244 (1999) is the principal legal basis for resolving that question. It is vital that in doing so we adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and engage in dialogue and negotiations within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in order to reach a compromise settlement that is acceptable to all the parties.

The recent security situation has remained generally stable, but Kosovo is still dealing with complexities and uncertainties. China commends the efforts by the Government of Serbia to find a political solution to this issue, and welcomes the fact that the high-level political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina has achieved progress and that existing agreements are being implemented. We support the ongoing efforts by both parties to maintain a pragmatic and constructive dialogue, effectively protect the legitimate rights of all of Kosovo's ethnic groups and promote national reconciliation. We hope that the parties will refrain from any actions that might escalate or complicate the situation and that they continue to search for a lasting solution to the question of Kosovo in order to maintain security and stability in the Balkans and in Europe as a whole.

China commends the work being done by UNMIK under the leadership of Special Representative Tanin. We support its continued efforts to carry out the Security Council's mandate, and we hope that the international presence in Kosovo, including UNMIK, the European Rule of Law Mission and the Kosovo Force, will improve their coordination with a view to playing a positive and constructive role in achieving an appropriate settlement of the Kosovo issue.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the briefing by Mr. Zahir Tanin and the statement by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić. We also welcome the presence of Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

Venezuela once again emphasizes that resolution 1244 (1999) remains the applicable international legal basis for achieving a comprehensive settlement within the framework of political negotiations on the issue of Kosovo. We have reiterated on numerous occasions the need for strict adherence to international law with regard to finding peaceful settlements to disputes, non-intervention and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Serbia.

The support of the United Nations continues to be fundamental in Kosovo, in particularly through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), in order to promote security, stability and respect for human rights — efforts that have been complemented by the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). UNMIK, KFOR and EULEX, based on their respective mandates, should continue to play a proactive, balanced, neutral and complementary role in the direct dialogue, with a view to promoting a lasting, sustainable, fair and mutually acceptable solution to the question of Kosovo.

While the report (S/2016/407) of the Secretary-General indicates that the security situation remained stable in recent months, we are concerned about the violent actions carried out by the opposition in the Kosovo Assembly, which impeded the effective implementation of the First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. We are also concerned about the difficulties faced by Serbs when it comes to the right of return. Given that situation, the association/community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo is yet to be established in northern Kosovo. Among other things, therefore, we urge the authorities of that province to work decisively to achieve that goal as agreed in Brussels at the highest level. In that context, we reiterate that violence is not the way to achieve peace and stability. We hope that the newly elected authority in the province of Kosovo will support the normalization process that was agreed in 2013, in an atmosphere of dialogue and mutual understanding. Now more than ever, it is necessary that meetings at the highest level take place between Pristina and Belgrade.

With regard to regular discussions facilitated by the European Union on the technical aspects, we welcome the fact that modalities have been agreed for the implementation of the 2011 agreement on mutual recognition of teaching diplomas, whereby the European University Association will handle the certification of diplomas. Education is a fundamental tool towards creating the values and principles of the culture of peace.

Furthermore, we regret the lack of progress in the integration of Serbian judges and prosecutors into Kosovo's judicial system in accordance with the agreements reached through the dialogue facilitated by the European Union. We urge that additional efforts be carried out to facilitate further agreements in different areas that can be supported at the highest political level, with a view to fully implement the agreements of 2013.

The issue of shedding light on the situation of persons who went missing during the war remains a priority. In that regard, we encourage interested parties to intensify joint work on the matter, and we welcome the public holding of the forty-second meeting of the Joint Working Group on Missing Persons, with the participation of Pristina and Belgrade. We also note the establishment of the commission for the verification and recognition of the status of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence as civilian victims, with the support of UN-Women.

In terms of cultural and religious heritage, we stress the need for the parties to work together to provide effective protection for important cultural heritage of the various Kosovar communities. In that regard, we see as a positive sign that efforts are under way by the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Kosovo authorities to resume meetings of the Implementation and Monitoring Council, which have been suspended since 2015.

In the context of the fight against impunity, progress includes the ratification of the agreement with the Government of the Netherlands to host the specialist chambers to investigate allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the armed conflict in Kosovo. We call on all stakeholders to continue working so that the chambers can begin their work as soon as possible. The application of justice in such cases under the due process will contribute to reconciliation and peace among all parties.

In the context of the fight against terrorism, we highlight the efforts of the authorities of the province of Kosovo to continue implementing measures to combat the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters in order to prevent the recruitment of citizens of the province by terrorists within the framework of the five-year strategy adopted on this issue. However, we are concerned about information about the high number of citizens who have joined the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham.

We remain convinced that the fight against terrorism must be accompanied, among other things, by effective strategies against social exclusion, poverty, violence and intolerant ideologies in order to prevent radicalization, especially of youth. In addition, we work must be carried out to effectively implement the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly prohibiting the financing, training and arms transfers to such groups.

In conclusion, we once again encourage the parties to redouble their efforts in pursuit of a peaceful, just and lasting political solution within the framework of international law, including full compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) and the 2013 Brussels agreements.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): My delegation welcomes the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku of Kosovo, back to New York, and thanks them both for their statements. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his insightful briefing.

My delegation welcomes the election of Mr. Hashim Thaçi as the new President of Kosovo. We commend his message on the normalization of relations with Serbia, as well as his priorities, which include the promotion of human rights and the countering of radicalization and violent extremism in Kosovo. We hope to see under his leaderhip sustained focus by Kosovo on reconciliation, unity, sociopolitical reforms and economic development. We would also like to pay tribute to former President Atifete Jahjaga for her leadership and significant contribution towards Kosovo's nation-building over the past five years.

Malaysia is concerned about the violent protests — mentioned by Mr. Tanin — by the opposition parties and their supporters in relation to the presidential elections, and the implementation of agreements signed between Pristina and Belgrade through dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU). We reiterate our calls on the relevant parties in Kosovo to cease violence, intimidation and inflammatory rhetoric, and

to resolve their grievances through democratic channels, dialogue and engagement. We hope that, under the new leadership, Kosovo leaders will continue to engage in an inclusive dialogue to address the people's concerns.

We recognize Kosovo's aspiration for European integration and welcome the latest development to that end, including the transfer of Kosovo to the visa-free list in the Schengen area and the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Kosovo and the EU. We call on the leaders of Kosovo to remain steadfast in implementing the Agreement and the necessary socioeconomic reforms towards peace, stability and prosperity for Kosovo and the region.

Malaysia also takes note of the progress made during the reporting period to implement Kosovo's five-year strategy to counter violent extremism and radicalization.

With regard to ensuring justice and accountability, we commend the ratification of the host agreement between Kosovo and the Netherlands on the Kosovo specialist chambers to try alleged crimes committed during the Kosovo conflict between 1998 and 2000.

Malaysia also welcomes the establishment of a Government commission and procedures for the verification and recognition of the status of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence as civilian victims, in collaboration with the UN-Women. Such developments are long overdue to ensure justice for the victims of sexual violence during the Kosovo conflict.

With regard to the historic 2013 Brussels Agreement between Belgrade and Pristina, we wish to see more movement towards its implementation, including the integration of the judiciary and the creation of an association of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo.

We reiterate the need to implement outstanding commitments in the spirit of dialogue, cooperation and constructive engagement, to build confidence and trust between Pristina and Belgrade. We therefore appreciate the positive signals and commitment by both sides at the highest level in that regard.

Lastly, I join my other colleagues in reaffirming support for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, which continues to play a key role in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo. We also commend the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, and the important role of the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Kosovo Force in ensuring peace, security, and the rule of law in Kosovo.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): I welcome the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku back to the Security Council today, and I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his briefing.

The political leadership in both Serbia and Kosovo has reiterated a commitment to continue normalizing relations. We encourage their ongoing determination to ensure that this important agenda continues to move forward. To do so, it will be necessary for both sides to implement agreements that have been reached so far, including in relation to Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. We hope that the EU-facilitated dialogue can continue to advance the process of normalizing relations, and that both sides can bring to the table the necessary political will and requisite flexibility to make progress possible. Ongoing technical discussions in Brussels can support the process by building shared understandings and common interests.

With respect to the political situation in Kosovo, we are disturbed by recent violent and disruptive episodes in the Assembly of Kosovo. As noted in the report (S/2016/407) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), acts of violence, in any form, remain an unacceptable means to express political views. When elected representatives engage in such acts it sets a poor example for others to emulate, and risks seriously undermining democratic institutions. Such incidents also undermine reconciliation efforts. We welcome efforts under way to promote a more peaceful and tolerant society in Kosovo, such as the Kosovo Government's recent conference on interfaith dialogue and heritage protection as tools of reconciliation and combating religious extremism. It is important that further progress towards reconciliation not be deterred or undermined by the efforts of a disruptive minority.

Another important aspect of reconciliation is confronting the past in order to allow a society to move forward together. We welcome further progress in the establishment of the specialist court to try allegations arising from the European Union Special Investigative Task Force, including Kosovo's ratification of a host agreement with the Netherlands. We hope that

the remaining preparatory work can be concluded expeditiously so that the court can begin its work as soon as possible.

As others have mentioned, we also urge further progress on rule-of-law issues, including ensuring respect for an independent and accountable judiciary and the appointment of judges and prosecutors from the Serbian judiciary into the Kosovo legal system.

Before I conclude, allow me to welcome the positive role UNMIK has played. We reiterate our view that the Council should adopt a more flexible approach to how it considers this agenda item, bearing in mind the number of other pressing issues with which the Council grapples.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the presence here of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić. We share his comments. We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his briefing on the work of the United Nations mission in Kosovo. We also listened very carefully to statement made by Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

Given the trajectory of the discussion, I would like to make a number of comments. First of all, resolution 1244 (1999) was and remains the only platform for resolving the situation in Kosovo. No one has the right unilaterally to revise the resolution. Security Council resolutions may be altered only by the Council itself. Secondly, a lot has been said about the need for recognition and the need for truth. I agree with that. It is true that, to resolve the very complex issues of Kosovo, they need to be acknowledged and we need to speak of them truthfully.

We should not remain silent about the real challenges in the province. Unfortunately, the main part of today's discussion has been devoted not to these problems and the issue of stability in the Balkans, but rather to technical and organizational matters. Nevertheless, the situation in the province is one of constant crisis and legal scepticism. The political situation remains unstable. Conflict with the Kosovo opposition, which demands a rejection of the agreement on the association/community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo and a revision of the border with Montenegro, is becoming increasingly brutal. Instead of defending its position through dialogue, the opposition has decided to use violence.

The European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is a mechanism for normalizing the situation in the province and yet, since August 2015, there has not been any progress. They key pending issue is the establishment of an association/community of Serb majority municipalities. The reason for this is neglect by the Kosovar Albanian side of their obligations and their attempts to revise them unilaterally and, unfortunately, with the silent consent of the European Union mediators. We hope that the specialist court established to investigate the crimes committed by the fighters of the Kosovo Liberation Army will begin its work as soon as possible and will not resume the unsuccessful methods of the work of the former International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

We are convinced that criminals, no matter what positions they currently occupy, must be punished. Time is passing. It seems that there are already problems with potential witnesses. In April, for example, a former fighter of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Bedri Curri, was killed. The only plausible reason for this crime is that apparently he might have been able to testify for the prosecution. We note the continuing gaps and problems with regard to the rule of law in the province. We have very serious doubts about the impartiality of justice, the effectiveness of the work of judges and prosecutors and are concerned about the high level of corruption, the violations of the freedom of the press and organized crime, including human trafficking and drug trafficking. These problems need to be addressed.

The situation of the Kosovar Serbs remains very difficult. There are still cases of physical violence against them. In January, the participants of an anti-governmental demonstration in Pristina desecrated the unfinished Church of Christ the Saviour in that city. The Kosovar police did nothing to intervene. I also point to the graffiti on the cathedral in Pristina praising the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). What is the meaning of that? There are other problems as well. Serbian monasteries, churches and cemeteries have once again become targets of violations and desecration. The international presence must step up it efforts to protect Serbian cultural and religious heritage. A great deal has been said about international requirements and the international presence. They are exactly the international requirements we need to fulfil, not just abstract slogans.

There are other problems as well. There have been clear attempts by the Kosovar authorities to acquire the Trepča mining complex, the main interest owner of which is the Foundation for Serbia's Development, a major employer of Kosovar Serbs in the north. They are also major problems with Serb properties in Kosovo. Some 30,000 units of Serb real estate have been encroached upon. This is an old problem that has not been resolved. A good example of this is the Visoki Dečani monastery, whose ownership is being contested. We have demanded that these problems be resolved for a long time in this Chamber. Those are international demands and requirements.

The rate of return of refugees and internally displaced persons is very slow. Furthermore, as we see it, Kosovar Albanians are very interested in going to Western Europe due to the extremely difficult socioeconomic situation in the province. We would like to point out that, owing to the weakness of law enforcement and the security situation in general, the province as a whole risks becoming a grey area in the middle of Europe, used as a refuge and a transit hub, not only by representatives of organized crime, but also by radical Islamists. All of this obviously is conducive to the use of the territory of the province by extremists for recruitment and training purposes.

As far as the graffiti about ISIL on the churches that I mentioned, it is a clear sign very dangerous attitudes among the locals. Kosovo is a leader in Europe in terms of the number of combatants fighting for ISIL per capita, while the population of the province is less than 2 million. This is a problem that affects not only the security of the Balkans, but Europe as a whole. It requires far more attention. We will see how the expected visa-free travel to Europe will impact migration flows into Europe. We believe that the solution to the situation is not to try to sweep the problems under the carpet, but rather to urge Pristina to immediately implement its obligations, including first and foremost the establishment of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities. That will be a real litmus test for their readiness to respect the independence of minorities and ensure their security.

It is not simply about shouting slogans, but about undertaking concrete steps and ensuring security and living up to the commitments undertaken in the framework of the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. Further delays will lead to a continued deterioration of the situation in and around Kosovo. We think that it is also counterproductive to try to promote Kosovo's membership in international organizations, which we have been seeing more and more recently. Resolution 1244 (1999) remains valid. Given the current unstable conditions, it is obviously very important to maintain the United Nations presence in Kosovo, through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, and the Mission must have all the necessary financial and human resources to carry out its mandate.

Today's discussion has demonstrated the timeliness of this issue. It is also very important to continue to follow the situation closely. Statements that run counter to this need also run counter to reality. In that connection, we say that the appeals that have been made today to radically reduce and drawdown the Mission or even to reformat its mandate have no grounds. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/407) clearly states that a huge amount of work remains to be done to build a democratic, multiethnic society in Kosovo.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I join others in welcoming Special Representative Tanin back to New York. I thank him for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/407) and for his briefing today. I also welcome First Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku to the Council and I thank them for their statements.

It has been less than three months since we last discussed Kosovo in this Chamber (see S/PV.7637), but in that short space of time we have continued to see welcome progress in Kosovo. Yes, clear challenges remain, but the decision to welcome Kosovo into the Union of European Football Associations and the Fédération internationale de Football Association last week both show that there is growing confidence in Kosovo among the international community.

The onus now is on the Kosovo authorities to seize this momentum to address the challenges ahead. To do so they will have to escape the fractious and divided politics that have characterized part of this reporting period. Violent protests and violent disruptions of parliamentary business have no place in any democracy in any part of the world. We therefore welcome the public commitment of the new President, Hashim Thaçi, to dialogue and to reaching out to minorities and bringing communities together. We hope that commitment will deliver real progress in those areas. The United

Kingdom looks forward to seeing all political leaders in Kosovo making that pledge.

This is precisely the moment for Kosovo to unite to tackle the big issues of the day, such as organized crime, corruption and issues concerning the rule of law. The swift ratification of the host State agreement on the specialist chambers shows that it can be done. It sent a powerful message about tackling impunity and addressing the past. We also fully support Kosovo's bid to join Interpol, not just for the sake of further integration into the international system but for the practical benefits that membership would bring.

Despite the protests, the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/407) makes it clear that the overall security situation, including in non-majority communities, remained stable throughout the reporting period. That is positive. Worrying incidents have continued, such as the recent regrettable attack on a Serbian television crew in Pristina, and they are a further demonstration of the need for increased outreach and the importance of building a more inclusive society. But we should not confuse acts of criminality with a more systemic problem. We should all rather look to the future, for Kosovo and the region.

Prospective membership in the European Union (EU) offers the greatest opportunity for stability and prosperity for the region. Rather than seizing on isolated incidents of ethnic tension, the Security Council would serve the people of the region much better by discussing the support we can offer them to help them realize their EU ambitions. Sadly, it is clear that more progress must be made on the EU-facilitated dialogue if normalized relations are to become a reality. Leaders in both Serbia and Kosovo must recognize that it is not enough just to commit to implementing agreements reached in the dialogue; they must deliver them, too, and stop putting further barriers in the way of their implementation.

Let us therefore call on both sides to step up their engagement in the dialogue and start delivering for the people in both their countries. For it is Brussels, not New York, that will shape the future of Kosovo. As such, we welcome the proposed reductions in the budget and personnel of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. It is clear that the Mission should be doing less, not more. In keeping with that approach, we reiterate our view that it is long past time to reduce the frequency of these meetings. We also support a reduction in the frequency of the Secretary-General's reports. They are useful tools, but the latest one, received just over two months after the previous Council meeting, repeats a great deal of information from the previous reporting period relating to the Stabilization and Association Agreement and the protests in Parliament, to name only two issues. Reports every six months would end that repetition and give the Special Representative and his team more time for in-depth analysis.

Ultimately, however, it is the actions outside this Chamber that will speak louder than the words uttered within it — actions such as the European Commission's recent recommendation to grant Kosovo visa liberalization; UEFA and FIFA's acceptance of Kosovo into their fold; the participation of Kosovo's athletes in the Olympic Games later this year; and the entry into force last month of Kosovo's Stabilization and Association Agreement. Such actions demonstrate that the discussions in this Chamber exist in a vacuum, a bygone era in which Kosovo's independence, sovereignty and very existence are still questioned. We need only look at the news from last week to see that that era is long over. The world and Kosovo are moving on without us.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Egypt.

At the outset, I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his thorough briefing to the Council. We fully support his efforts. I would also like to welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku, and to thank them for their statements.

Egypt has been following the recent political developments in Kosovo and hopes that its recent presidential election augurs a new beginning and an opportunity to engage in transparent and constructive internal dialogue aimed at reducing recent tensions. We would also like to warn against the escalation of those tensions by opposition forces in Kosovo and to reject any resort to violence as a means for expressing political opposition. It will be important to build on the recent statements by Kosovo officials regarding their full commitment to carrying out the agreements signed with Serbia. We would like to emphasize the importance of making every effort to arrive at a comprehensive

settlement of all the issues outstanding between Belgrade and Pristina through sincere negotiations and dialogue based on good intentions and mutual respect between the two sides, and within the framework of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 1244 (1999).

That can be achieved only by creating a constructive regional climate conducive to a resumption of the political dialogue held under the European Union's auspices. In that regard, we should emphasize the importance of implementing every provision of all four pillars of the agreement of August 2015, without exceptions. We should avoid turning the agreement into a point of contention and seize the opportunity it presents to reach final settlements aimed at paving the way for economic development and achieving prosperity for all the peoples of the region.

We should also build on some of the positive developments mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/4007) on the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina regarding certification of academic documents and other steps. We believe in the importance of continuing dialogue at the technical level as a step towards normalizing relations between the two sides. We commend the ratification of the international agreement concerning the hosting by the Netherlands of the specialist chambers for trying war crimes perpetrated during the conflict. We hope it will help to buttress the principles of the rule of law, accountability and justice with a view to achieving comprehensive reconciliation. We call for the provision of the support needed to ensure the specialist court's work and to its establishment as soon as possible.

At the same time, we look forward to seeing enhanced efforts by the Kosovo authorities with regard to the voluntary return of internationally displaced persons, protecting artefacts of cultural and religious heritage, speeding up settlements and comprehensive reconciliation, ending discrimination among all communities, protecting minority rights and consolidating the rule of law, in addition to the need for support to the authorities in confronting the challenges presented by refugees and the threat of terrorism. In that connection, we support the five-year strategy that Kosovo has outlined for fighting terrorism with a view to tackling that serious challenge.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our support for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We emphasize the need to foster coordination among the efforts of the Mission, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with a view to carrying out all the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999).

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of Serbia has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian, English interpretation provided by the delegation*): As the representative of the Republic of Serbia, I am persistently trying not to bring up this subject — and only discuss the reporting period covered in the report (S/2016/407) — but, sadly, Ms. Çitaku consistently held forth and delivered a political speech that had nothing to do with the report on the last three-month period. I am therefore forced to react.

Ms. Çitaku's speech, which was distributed to Council members, uses the words "the Republic of Kosovo" in its heading, when in fact no such name is used in the official communications at the United Nations. I therefore truly hope that you, Mr. President, are going to modify this item in your agenda because Ms. Çitaku has been invited to the Council under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure, and not as the representative of the so-called Republic of Kosovo, which does not exist here at the United Nations. If that were the case, if the Republic of Kosovo existed, why have I been invited here? What does the Republic of Kosovo have to do with the Republic of Serbia? I would ask that you pay due attention to this breach of the rules of procedure, Mr. President, as it has been a constant irritant, about which we have shown great restraint until now.

Ms. Çitaku made a reference to genocide. Where is the verdict where the events that occurred were defined as genocide? I would again ask the President to pay due attention when certain words are used. I would also like to appeal to certain members of the Security Council to take into consideration, when they are speaking of genocide and other terms and phrases, that it does not matter what our positions are; rather, what matters is what the judicial rulings have to say and whether

something was determined on a legal basis. We are not the ones who can make a judgment as to whether a genocide had been committed or not. What is important is whether a court issued a ruling on this.

Five or six years after the Second World War, France and Germany created the European Coal and Steel Community. Since 199, a very long period of time has passed, yet Ms. Çitaku spoke of fresh memories. Should I remind you, Mr. President, of the Battle of Kosovo in the fourteenth century? Should I remind you of the fact that in the fourteenth century the Serbian population was the majority? How can she speak of genocide when it is her majority that has committed a genocide? Some 200,000 Serbs were expelled from Kosovo since 1999.

The Special Representative, Mr. Tanin, is present here. I wish that he would dare say that 200,000 people were expelled from Kosovo, and up until now only 1.9 per cent of them have permanently returned. Should we overlook this fact?

Ms. Çitaku mentioned massacres, genocides and so forth. I would remind Ms. Çitaku that there are courts to decide such matters — The Hague Tribunal, and because of the crimes committed by Kosovo, there is a going to be a specialist court with its headquarters in the Netherlands. I would ask her to stop hearking back to the 1990s.

As has been mentioned here, we should not turn the Security Council into a forum where we compete for the award for best imaginative work. Ms. Çitaku spoke of everything but the topic at hand. Why did we meet today? We were convened to discuss the real problems. Yet Ms. Çitaku has spoken of sports achievements, when she should speak of the day-to-day problems such as the fact that tear gas is being used in the Kosovo Parliament, or the fact that Kosovo has turned the Church of Christ the Saviour into a public toilet. During their demonstrations, the Kosovars have been abusing cultural landmarks such as the Visoki Dečani Monastery, whose walls were covered with graffiti saying "ISIL and the caliphate are coming".

We have nothing against Kosovo. Its people should live their lives, but Kosovo's representatives should not be allowed to constantly speak of the Kosovo people's freedom and the fact that they are now allowed to play football. Now that they are "free", should they alone be entitled to win on the soccer pitch? Throughout history, the Serbs were the majority demographic in Kosovo. But due to a Turkish invasion, followed by a five-centuries-long occupation, the Serbian majority was turned into a minority. Those who have committed crimes should be brought to trial. Today the Pristina appeals court upheld the acquittal of Fatmir Limaj, who had been accused of crimes committed against Serbs.

With regard to the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), I would say that it breached its statute when it admitted Kosovo as a member even though Kosovo is not a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. Such admission is in direct breach of the UEFA rules.

Members of the Security Council should consider what is going to happen in future when some of their countries find themselves in the same situation. I ask the representatives of these large countries to treat us with respect. I duly respect the United States and other countries. But what has been said here does not demonstrate that they respect us.

In the Security Council, in the presence of Serbia, Member States were called upon to recognize the independence of Kosovo, and the Council is saying that only a minority of countries have not recognized Kosovo's independence. But I would like to remind the United States and the United Kingdom that neither Angola, China, Spain, the Russian Federation Ukraine, Uruguay nor Venezuela has recognized Kosovo. The recognition of Kosovo by Egypt was the final act of its former President, Mr. Morsi, but Egypt has not gone any further in the operationalization of that recognition. If seven member States have not recognized Kosovo's independence, how can it be said that only a minority of States have not recognized Kosovo? Should we add up the population of all those seven countries? I think the Council is not being fair and balanced in its treatment of Serbia, which has been a very constructive partner in the dialogue with Pristina.

I call upon all countries that recognize Kosovo to reverse their decision, because this situation could arise in future in any part of the world. And when they speak of recognition, there is no mention of the Islamic factor or European values. This is simply a case of upholding international law and whether one country can, without any consultation with the country of which it is an integral part, secede and separate from it. If the Council believes that should be the case, it should codify it and include it in its resolutions and decisions.

As we are observing resolution 1244 (1999), we intend to come here and be constructive.

Ms. Çitaku is of Albanian descent. I am a Serb. Kosovo is hers as much as it is mine. It belongs to all of us who live there, or used to live there. I was born in Kosovo, but no longer live there. But there are hundreds of thousands of Serbs. What are we going to do with the 200,000 Serbs who were expelled from Kosovo? Do the great Powers think it nice to say that 200,000 people were expelled and only 2 per cent have realized sustainable return? Kosovo is a free and democratic State, but what are we going to do with those 200,000 people? When will they be able to return?

We cannot agree with the fact that, when it comes to Serbia, certain international agreements are made, sometimes unilateral steps are taken. We are not in favour of unilateral moves, for when you do that sometimes you win and sometimes you lose, as in the case of UNESCO. I think we are all fed up with the fact that we are constantly speaking and elaborating the same topic. Let us resolve this issue. But no, Kosovo thinks this topic has been resolved. If Ms. Çitaku thinks this issue has been resolved, then please first consult Spain whether or not her Stabilization and Association Agreement is the same. Well, it is not. Spain and other countries asked that Kosovo not sign with the European Commission under State status, but as a territory. That is why I think this is still a pending issue.

Ms. Çitaku spoke about everything, but failed to mention security issues and everything else that was to be the subject of this debate. For the next time, therefore, we will have to prepare diligently for the meeting — who did more to whom throughout history — if she thinks this is the way to conduct these meetings.

Ms. Çitaku is not Kosovar, she is Albanian. Serbs and other minorities — all of us — have our sore spots in history. But we should not constantly return to history, but instead look to the future.

I was not the only one to sign the Brussels Agreement; Mr. Thaçi signed it with me. Is Ms. Çitaku going to sabotage the Agreement and constantly try to talk about genocide, or is she willing to talk and work towards establishing good relations? The fact that Serbia is being constructive should not be viewed as our weakness, but as us being open to discussion and flexibility. They should not use this meeting to hearken to the past. If they think someone committed genocide, rape and other crimes, then please take them to court. But do not abuse this venue to promote their country's independence. Resolution 1244 (1999) is status-neutral. I call upon all countries to uphold the legitimate interests of Serbia, as we are upholding other countries' legitimate interests.

I thank the Council once again. I asked to speak here today because, every time we speak with representatives of Western countries — the United States, the United Kingdom, France and so on — we always talk about de-escalating and reducing harsh rhetoric. We always ultimately agree to do so, but then we come here and are forced to listen to long speeches that have nothing to do with the state of play on the ground. If the Council wants us to fair and correct, we will do so. But if it wants us to do as Kosovo does, we will prepare ourselves to elaborate at the next meeting about what has been done throughout history.

The Serbian tragedy lies in the fact that the Serbian Orthodox council is in Kosovo holding a meeting. Why? Because it is the headquarters of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Patriarchate. It is because Serbia was established in Kosovo. Please, do not force me to speak about this. Ms. Çitaku cannot speak about this, because at the time they were not present in Kosovo. The battle for Kosovo was fought between Turkey and Serbia, in Kosovo. That does not mean that each and every Security Council meeting should be devoted to elaborating on all these topics. We should be very pragmatic and efficient. Whether they want to reconcile or not, they cannot achieve their goals without previous agreement with Serbia.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Ms. Vlora Çitaku has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Çitaku: It is unfortunate that, 17 years after the war — and I am talking here about a war that happened in the twentieth century — we see no remorse, regret or apology. I was a teenager during the war, and my colleague from Serbia was a senior State official. The least once should do is apologize for the atrocities and for the lives lost. Serbia caused the most horrific catastrophe in Europe since the Second World War. And we have yet to see condemnation of those atrocities, not only in Kosovo but also in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is a very bipolar approach. You cannot say that you are for reconciliation when we do not address the past. We can build a joint

future in the region only if we speak in earnest about what happened, if we are honest about what happened.

To claim today that I am not a Kosovar or a citizen of Kosovo, or that Albanians did not live in Kosovo is pitiful. We do not have to stop at the fourteenth century; we can go further back. But that is an argument for other forums. This is a Chamber where we discuss resolution 1244 (1999), and our point has been consistently clear. Resolution 1244 (1999) no longer fits the reality, and we all know why it cannot be replaced — for political reasons.

At the end of the day, it was the International Court of Justice, the highest international legal body, that stated very clearly that Kosovo did not breach international law when it declared independence. It also stated very clearly that States exist for their citizens, and not the other way around. If you consistently repress, oppress and commit genocide, ethnic cleansing and mass murder, what is the justification of that State for maintaining control of that population? The opinion of the Court is public, so when I hear my colleague here saying all the time that he hopes that every single country in the world that has recognized Kosovo goes through what Serbia has gone through, I say: "I hope not". I hope that no people in the world will suffer and go through what we have gone through.

We hear all the time about the 200,000 Serbs who left Kosovo. I want to reiterate that every single citizen of Kosovo is free to return — every single one of them. We have gone to great lengths and adopted unprecedented measures to accommodate the needs of all minority communities in Kosovo. We have reserved seats in Parliament. We have them as Ministers in the Government. There is sufficient budget allocated to meet their needs. But what they need to hear from Serbia is a message that Kosovo is their State and that Pristina is the address where they can resolve their problems. This ambiguity must end, because we can discuss many things but there is one thing we will never discuss — our right to exist as a free nation under the sun. Our independence is irreversible. Kosovo is a State. Of course it has problems, like any newborn. But I urge people to come and visit Kosovo and see with their own eyes the progress we have managed to make together.

We have also heard references made here to Mr. Limaj's case. Mr. Limaj was indicted by the Basic Court, as confirmed by the Presiding Trial Judge of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, and he was found innocent. That is justice, and unlike other people we do not argue about the findings of the Court.

There was a reference made to a church built in the centre of Pristina. Now, while we do not support any form of vandalism, let me say that this church is not a historic site. The church was built during the Milošević regime. It is not a part of the cultural heritage; it is a political statement. Of course we will work closely with the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo to find an appropriate solution, but let us describe things as they are. We want peace. We want good-neighbourly relations. We want reconciliation. But those cannot be built on denial.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.